1/1/73

his wound

portrait of RH
his best 'portrait'
qua portrait 'likeness'

The Little Company of Mary
Calvary Nursing Home, Sudbury Hill
Harrow on the Hill Middlesex

KALENDIS IANVARIIS
anno ab Incarnatione Xti.
MCMLXXIII

I hope you have read this letter, despite its illegibility, mistakes & many a straight nonsense — more fool it may be — it is now Thursday Jan 4th 73.

N.B.
None of this letter is meant for publication — so forgive it.

Dearest René

Thanks for yr letter just received. I had heard from Douglas a bit back that there was nothing you wanted be coming from Iwerddon acrs the south channel to Asser's dextralis pars Brittania on account of a ~~TV programme~~ Harlech T.V. programme, but I scarcely believe that such an uprooting could ever be become substaniate. I felt it too much ~~too ask~~ of them to ask of you. And find it difficult to express my gratitude that you should have undertaken the task. I see it was to Cardiff you had to come & so saw the exhibition at present in the gallery of yr Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru (the Museum National of Wales). Naturally I am exceedingly delighted that you found the stuff looked alright. & not a disappointment after the lapse of years — for so often things that may have lifted, ~~quite a bit~~ perhaps quite a bit, disappoint on ~~to~~ seeing some time later. Like Taplow of certain Britmans that 'their gilt-edges had worn off'. Glad you chanced to notice that portrait of yourself made in the billet — for I'm pretty sure it is the best 'portrait' you portract — 'likeness' of any I've attempted. For portraiture in that sense, has never been a thing I could manage very well. I remember it has always the window & the distant a couple of hay-ricks toward that path that led to Little Pigotts, is my memory right. & your sore-arm looks very powerful for pulling that hand-press. A chap called Cemlyn Jones owns it & says that he owns the largest drawing made by D.J. — I forget who told me that.

Talking of 'largeness' its very gratifying that you felt things like Aphrodite in Aulis seemed larger than you had thought. that was very consoling for so often things disappoint one a bit by seeming of less 'mass' than one had thought. Talking of 'mass' & what the scientists tell us of velocity causing weight — I suppose thats why when a machine-gun or maybe rifle bullet passed clean through my left leg without touching the fibula or tibia — but merely through the calf. it felt as if a great baulk of timber or a heavy bar of some sort had

struck me sideways, in fact I thought a ponderous branch of ~~other~~ one of the trees of the wood ~~had~~ had been severed by schrapnel & had fallen across my leg but couldn't account for the extreme violence & weight. I did not realize it was S.A.A. until I tried to stand up & feel the wetness seeping to the wound that I realized ~~what was~~ I'd been hit by more little bullet, but the disproportion of the ~~projectile~~ smallest of the nickle projectile & the great bludgeoning weight of the impact astonished me even at the time. Of course I have little or no idea of the distance that separates me from the rifle, or ~~machine-gun~~ may be machine-gun, that fired off the shot. Might have been a few yards or a hundred yards or more & it was extremely dark & a general confusion - I mean firing coming from various directions and suppose the 'mass' created by the velocity stands in some exact relationship to length of the trajectory line. Anyway the it remains odd that being hit clear through the leg by a round of S.A.A. should give one the impression of being swiped by a thoroughly great bauk of timber such as a ship's boom suddenly by some accident slewed round. I've never curiously enough, asked of anyone who'd claimed to be hit ~~of~~ in the same way by a rifle-bullet if they had the same impression, ~~of~~ ~~[illegible]~~ and being pierced by a bit of metal but of being subjected to some great weight. - I expect it depends on a number of different factors.

I was hit in the chest by a bit of a bullet and went through a whole wedge of stuff in my tunic left pocket & just scraped & grazed the skin, but that, I didn't even feel, it must have been practically spent before it came to me, & was, anyway, a ricochet of some sort, yet, now the less rather surprising, had ~~a~~ still sufficient impetus to go through the wedge of stuff, letters mainly, in my tunic pocket & 'cardigan', waistcoat, shirt & vest - so I cant account for not feeling its impact. On another occasion some heavy bit of stuff with evidently a sharp edge came down on my shrapnel helmet & just failed to penetrate it but left a dent of herring-bone pattern on the inside for side & side, that did knock me out for a little while, a few moments ~~[illegible]~~ I suppose, & spread the tin-hat down over my ears & eyes but the only effect of that was a very stiff neck & painful that lasted a week ~~[illegible]~~ and more. But I have no the least idea what that was - might have been any red bit of iron - it was thrown up by a mine-explosion just outside the trench - so was many a bit of falling debris - not a discharge for a gun, I mean, & dropt, so to say, out of the sky.

Very glad Douglas gave you a copy of the Intro & Aout Meaning thing. I wondered what you'd make of it. Do you like the title-page? Glad they were able to make us of the 1929 discarded tailpiece. I cant imagine how I ~~manage~~ managed to ~~make~~ engrave that bit ~~Non Democrat~~

Non me demerrat etc. in copper without making a mess of it. ~~For~~ for I usually put some letters the wrong way round in engraving & copper ~~was~~ was/or me, so intractible a medium & I usually slipped out all over the shop but on that particular piece I appear to have managed to make it look like a quite freely ~~tooling~~ written thing – it was making all the letters backwards that used to get me down ~~but~~ but by some fluke it appears to have come off in this case. How, I can't imagine.

Sorry you dont approve of the note on page [38] that drags in Nelson's ~~sig~~ message to the fleet and its wretched 'emended' signal. ~~Perhaps~~.

I cant see that what you feel touching the business of 'the utile' – or 'gratuitous' etc. 'the hard truth' brick wall that E. come up against pro on side & you the other, has any bearing either way on this particular note of mine on this confounded signal. I think it may have been unwise or unsuitable to drag it in this example of an emendation ~~that~~ & ~~was particularly~~ that it would have been better to leave it at the unfortunate emendation of Dr Watts great hymn When I survey the Wonrous Cross, where 'Young prince of glory' that led back houses, unconscious, to ~~the George~~

Pa Georg Kaele's poet

was God Almihtig of the

Dean of the Rood, and that emendations usually tended to be deprivative.

But you know how it is, one thing sets the mind at random or rather one cant resist perhaps recalling ~~the coming the event~~ some example that as far as one's personal feeling go, is a really ~~[illegible]~~ appalling example of 'emendation'. I was in no sense arguing that a case or being blind to the reasons for the ~~[illegible]~~ signals officer ~~[illegible]~~ rather if 'expects' could be substituted for 'confides' there being no code-permit for 'Confides' and the time was short

As for the initial change of ~~Nelson~~ 'England' in place of 'Nelson', having no ref. books with me here I ~~can't~~ don't know who suggested that, but a more highly placed Officer of the Fleet. It is said that Nelson enthusiastically agree to that. He could hardly do other than appear to approve under the circumstances. Similarly, or even more so, ~~he could hardly~~ he could hardly insist on a short-out 'confides' on being told that a ~~sig~~ single code-permitted word give effects.

All I say is that it was a pity things turned out as they did — the causes are fairly plain to see. 'A pity' because what was lost was a precise, true, rational, 'warm but authoritative' 'message' (that was Nelson's own ~~word~~ word previous to his giving his order) in impeccable English expressing with brevity & exactitude what I had in mind. I was saying no more than that "Nelson confides the every man will do his ~~duty~~ duty' ~~is~~ surpasses in every way the signal that ~~was~~ in fact replaced it ~~&~~ which has come down to ~~us~~ us, sometimes with the addition, 'this day'.

'England expects that every man [this day] will do his duty'.

It is rather analogous to those pathetic translations of the Liturgy ~~attempts~~, always less precise, usually ~~obscuring~~ falsifying by some generalization what is very exact & direct in the original. However we must not launch out on a wider sea of trouble.

Anyway all I meant in that mention of the Trafalgar signal was to indicate the vast superiority of the intended message when compared with its mangled ~~[illegible]~~ and indeed falsified remains. I can't believe you disagree with that judgment. Though it may well be that it was a mistake to on my part to conclude that earlier when I did. But it is easy to see how it seemed natural enough at the time of writing owing to the A. M. evoking almost anything coming to us from thalassic ~~[illegible]~~ sources.

What I can't see is that this involves a thesis (if that's the right word) with which you find you can't agree.

But perhaps you are speaking of something implicit in ~~the~~ something in the general trend of the Introduction or parts of it, rather than the more

in fact as I can recall the Nelson had to someone else with the signal a message to the fleet.

statement that the emendation, for whatever cause, of 'Nelson confides that every man will do his duty' was a blood pity from every point of view.

But, as I say above, it may well be that it was a mistake ~~to~~ my part to extend the note beyond the example of Dr Watts' hymn & the observation that 'Emendations tend to be depressive'. For I think it true that they so often are – not always, of course, but pretty often.

I don't so much mind the ~~[illegible]~~ 'vulgar', in the sense of popular, ones ~~[illegible]~~ for they are usually so extremely unlike us to be comic. e.g. Wellington's supposed "Up Guards, and at 'em" for the general order that the ~~[illegible]~~ entire line be advanced.

However, enough of this.

I meant this to be a letter of many many thanks for coming to Cardiff to make that T.V. thing & for all you say of the exhibition & I wanted to say all kinds of things but it's turned out to be a very inadequate & boring letter I fear & I must stop now to get something to post it for me with some other much delayed letters.

It's an awful nuisance, but I've not been well just lately ~~and~~ had to go to see chap in Harley St, the prosonbal some different pills etc some months back ~~[illegible]~~ that greatly improved my condition – but lately I've had a bit of a return of the old nerves – nothing to do with the fall etc. However he's confident* that this can be dealt with but of course I've not yet started on the changed prescriptions & it will take time in any case. So forgive my ~~[illegible]~~ not writing more & better now.

Much love to Joan & blessings on Ros & her chosen.

Again a thousand thanks

Dear René

in great haste

Yours as ever

David

* He's a most extremely able & intelligent & nice bloke but Harman got me to see him.

Valerie suddenly appeared a few evenings back out of a thick fog – it was heavenly seeing her. She & her husband (& chicken) had come up to London for a couple of days. She was so pleased that I had come to ~~[illegible]~~ see the exhibition & make that T.V. thing. I was overjoyed & astonished when she suddenly appeared. I hope she got back safe to London – for the fog was worse when she left.

David.